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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/EPS AND AF/S/TCRAIG AND KGAITHER
DEPT FOR EB/TRA/AN/CDEMARS, LFAUX-GABLE, ESMITH
TRANSPORTATION FOR SMCDERMOTT, KBHATIA, GRETCH

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR TRANSPORT MINISTER RADEBE'S U.S.

VISIT

REF: A. PRETORIA 5259

1B. PRETORIA 5072

1C. PRETORIA 4786

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11. (SBU) SUMMARY. South Africa's Minister of Transport Jeffrey Radebe will travel to the United States January 23 to meet with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, New York City Port and Transit Authorities, FAA modal administrators, and to initiate Open Skies talks between South Africa and the United States. Radebe's visit follows a September 2004 meeting with Secretary Mineta and an October 2004 meeting with U.S. Department of Transportation's (DoT) Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Susan McDermott. Radebe assigned South Africa's lead aviation negotiator, Godfrey Selepe, to find solutions to any South African objections or obstacles to an Open Skies agreement. South African Airways (SAA) officials, however, told Econoff that they favor a managed liberalization process and fear that an Open Skies agreement with the United States would compel them to consider an Open Skies agreement with the U.K.

END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) South Africa's Minister of Transport Jeffrey Radebe (pronounced "ha-DAY-bay") will travel to the United States January 23 for a week of meetings in both NYC and Washington D.C. The purpose of his visit is to meet with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta, New York City Port and Transit Authorities, FAA modal administrators, and to initiate Open Skies talks between South Africa and the United States. (NOTE: To the best of Post's knowledge, SAA officials are unaware that SAG and U.S. officials will be engaging in informal Open Skies talks. END NOTE)

PRECURSORS TO RADEBE VISIT

13. (SBU) Minister Radebe's visit to the United States follows up on a September 2004 meeting with Secretary Mineta at the 35 ICAO Assembly and an October 2004 meeting between the Minister and U.S. Department of Transportation's (DoT) Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs Susan McDermott in Cape Town. During the Cape Town visit, Radebe was well versed on transportation issues, having served previously as Minister of Public Enterprises where he oversaw the administration of South Africa's state-owned rail, ports, and South African Airways (SAA). Radebe expressed interest in the U.S. DoT's organizational structure, the collaboration between DoT modal administrators, and the Secretary's authority vis a vis the various DoT agencies. The Minister has publicly commented several times that President Mbeki's priorities of creating economic growth and reducing unemployment correspond directly to the establishment of efficient and comprehensive transportation systems in both a rural and urban environment. Dr. Ian Phillips, Special Advisor to the Minister, told Econoff that Minister Radebe holds Secretary Mineta in very high regard and respects his public service record as well as his experience in transportation matters.

OPEN SKIES

14. (SBU) During the Minister's meeting with DAS McDermott, Radebe agreed that without transport links, trade could not develop to its full potential. Radebe acknowledged that this problem is crippling Africa's development. He indicated that an Open Skies agreement would benefit the development of aviation services in Africa and said that South Africa was "committed to do everything possible" to liberalize Africa's skies. He said that while many fear an Open Skies agreement means South Africa would be "gobbled up" by U.S. air carriers, the Lan Chile experience was reassuring. Radebe said that his primary responsibility as Minister was to oversee the expansion and accessibility of transportation

services (including aviation) rather than the promotion and protection of SAA (Reftel C). Radebe said that Open Skies "looks compelling." On the South African side, the Minister has been the impetus to initiating the upcoming Open Skies talks with the United States and expects these talks to lead to formal negotiations. He has assigned South Africa's lead aviation negotiator, Godfrey Selepe, to draft a paper on the pros and cons of Open Skies from South Africa's perspective. He has also asked Selepe to find solutions to any SA objection or obstacle to an Open Skies agreement.

15. (SBU) In a November 17, 2004 meeting, South African Airways Executive Manager for International Affairs Oosha Chirkoot told Econoff that a major factor in not entering into an Open Skies agreement with the United States is that it would compel SAA to consider Open Skies agreements with the U.K. and others, where it is attempting to leverage an Open Skies agreement to acquire more slots at Heathrow.

RADEBE BIOGRAPHY

16. (U) According to Radebe's government biographies and local press, he was born August 6, 1953 in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Malcolm X, Angela Davis, and Martin Luther King inspired Radebe and he joined South Africa's Black Consciousness movement. He later joined the African National Congress (ANC) underground during the student uprisings in 1976. Radebe earned a bachelor's of law degree from the University of Zululand in the 1970s then left South Africa in 1977. For the next nine years, Radebe worked for the ANC outside of the country in a variety of capacities. During this time, Radebe also earned a master's degree in international law from Leipzig University in East Germany and attended the Lenin International School in Moscow.

17. (U) In 1986, Radebe was arrested in Johannesburg and imprisoned on Robben Island for six years. While on Robben Island, Radebe quickly rose to head the ANC's political department at the prison. Following his 1990 release, Radebe became Project Coordinator for the National Association of Democratic Lawyers and eventually served as the Chairman of the SACP's interim Leadership Group as well as the Chairman for the ANC's Southern Natal region where he was instrumental in peace negotiations with the Zulu-dominated Inkatha Freedom Party.

18. (U) After a successful job as Minister of Public Works from 1994 to 1999, Radebe was appointed as Minister of Public Enterprises. Government observers believed that as a member of the SACP's central committee, Radebe would be able to sell the government's privatization program to its communist and labor critics. However, Radebe encountered resistance from union and communist leaders upset at the loss of jobs caused by privatization. Radebe withdrew from the SACP's Central Committee in 2002 over differences in how to handle privatization. The highlight of Radebe's five years at Public Enterprises was the successful initial public offering (IPO) of 25 percent of Telkom stock, which raised R3.9 billion (\$500 million).

19. (U) Following the April 2004 elections, President Mbeki transferred Radebe to the Department of Transport. As Minister of Transport, Radebe is focusing on projects to improve inter-city transportation services especially for lower income citizens commuting on a daily basis. In particular, Radebe is promoting a taxi recapitalization project and metro rail upgrade. Radebe is also seeking pan-African support to implement the Yamoussoukro Agreement to create more liberal aviation agreements within the continent.

20. (U) In 1997, Radebe married prominent businesswoman Bridgette Motsepe. Motsepe was a pioneer in the struggle to change the gender and complexion of South African mining. She founded Mmakau Mining in 1995 and currently serves as its CEO. Her brother, Patrice Motsepe, is also a major player in the mining industry and is the Chairperson of Harmony Gold Mining Company. In 2004, the Financial Mail magazine ranked Bridgette Motsepe as South Africa's fourth most powerful woman in business.

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